



Canada's First Peoples

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The Plateau People

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The Plateau peoples lived in a small region that included the southern interior of British Columbia and Alberta.

Food / Hunting

The people of the Plateau region were mainly hunter-gatherers, relying on the area's natural resources for food.



White-tailed deer

Hunting

- The men of the Plateau were skilled hunters. There were many animals in the Plateau region, so they hunted for a wide variety of food.
- They mostly hunted deer and caribou as a source of food.
- In fact, all men in the Plateau culture were expected to hunt for deer, mainly white-tailed deer.
- However, men, who, over time, had acquired additional physical and spiritual abilities, became the 'professional' hunters.
- These 'professional' hunters were the ones who hunted bear and mountain goat.
- The people of the Plateau also hunted smaller animals for furs and food such as:
 - coyote
 - fox
 - raccoon
 - porcupine
 - marten
 - weasel
 - beaver
 - marmot
 - hare



Mule deer



Caribou



Black bear



Grizzly bear



Elk



Mountain sheep



Coyote



Fox



Raccoon



Porcupine



Marten



Weasel



Beaver



Hare



Marmot



Marmot

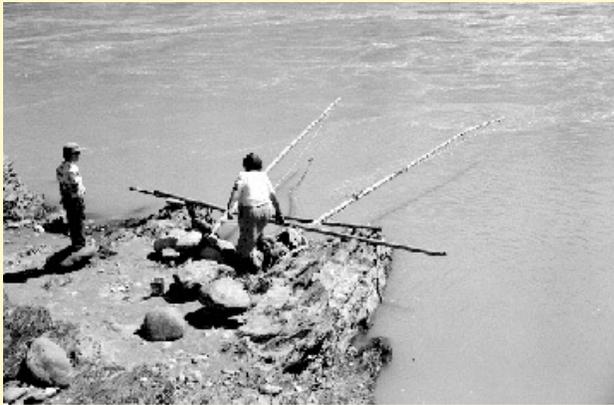
Fishing



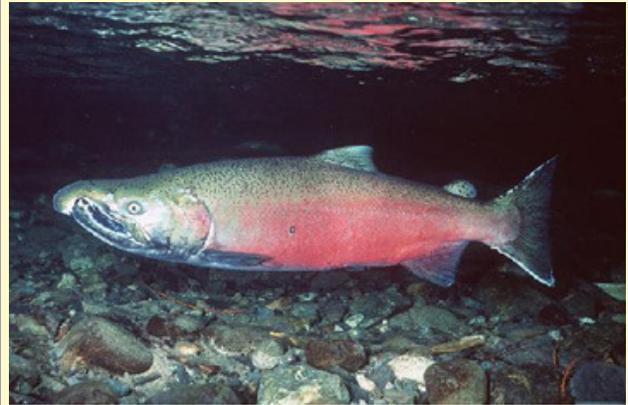
Man fishing with harpoon

- While the Plateau people were skilled hunters, the majority of their food came from the local rivers and lakes.
- Men were responsible for all the fishing.
- The single most important food to the survival of the Plateau people was the Pacific Salmon.
- During the late summer and early fall, there were large salmon runs in the area. Salmon runs occurred when a huge volume Pacific Salmon from the ocean entered the interior rivers to spawn. It was in these rivers where the Plateau people were able to catch a large number of fish.
- How fish were caught:
 - The Plateau people developed several methods for catching salmon and other fish.
 - Normally salmon weirs (large traps) were set up in these public rivers to catch the salmon.
 - The weirs would catch a large number of fish as they tried to swim upstream to spawn.
 - In some areas where salmon was particularly abundant, the fish could be scooped from the water using a dip net or basket.
 - Men also set up wooden platforms that hung out over the river and would use dip nets or spears to catch the fish.

- Most of the fishing locations were deemed to be 'community' or 'public' fishing grounds. Fish caught at these locations were shared amongst all the individuals in a community.
- While most fishing areas were free for everyone to use, there were some spots that were owned by individuals or families and only they were allowed to fish there.
- When a man only needed to catch a few fish for his family, he usually fished using a three-pronged harpoon.
- If a man caught fish this way, it would normally just be a few fish for his family, and he was not expected to share with the rest of the village.



St'at'imx fishing



Pacific salmon



Salmon run in the river



Salmon weir in river



Coiled baskets



Fishing platform in Fraser River

Gathering

- The women in the Plateau region did the gathering. They would gather berries, roots, and bulbs for food



Basket for berries

- and medicine.
- They gathered and ate many local berries, such as raspberries.
- Special baskets were used for gathering roots and berries.
- After picking the berries, the women dried them, as a way to preserve them for the winter months.



Raspberry bush



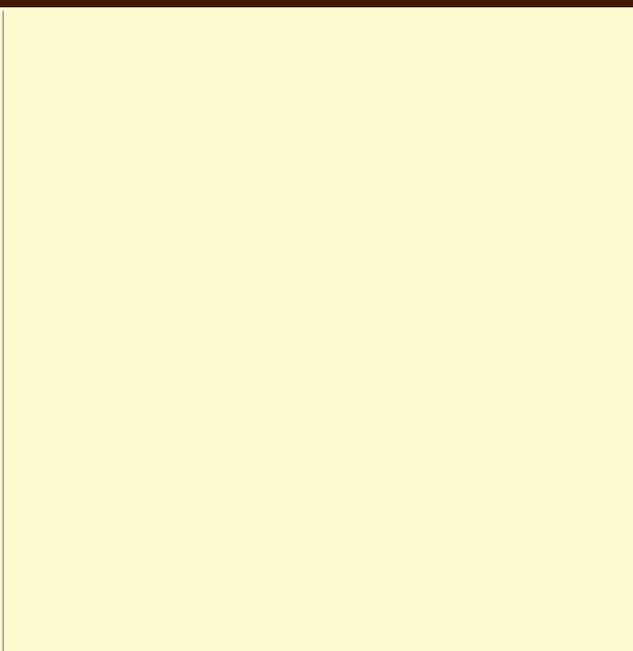
Stl'atl'imx women drying berries

Preparing the Food

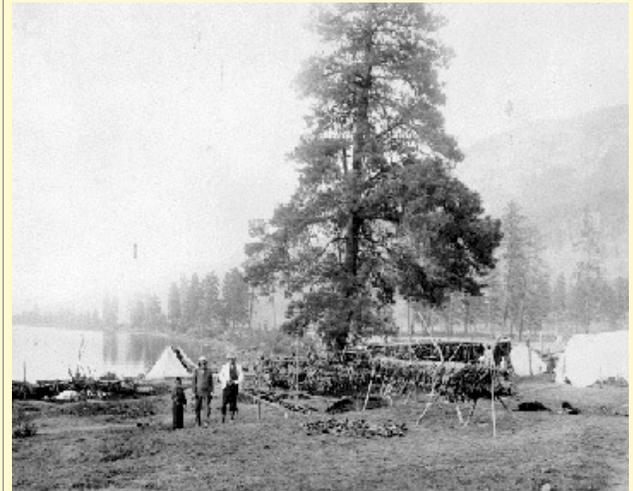
- It was the woman's job to prepare all of the food for her family.
- If she prepared the meat or fish to eat fresh, she roasted it in on spits over the fire, baked it in the ashes, or boiled it in baskets (with hot rocks and water).
- However, most of the food was caught in the summer and preserved to keep for the winter months.
- Smoked and dried fish and meat were more important to the Plateau people than fresh fish and meat. This was because they could preserve the fish and meat and eat it during the tougher winter months.
- Women cleaned the salmon, cut them into filets and hung them out in the sun to dry.



Cooking Salmon over fire



Drying meat in a tent



Drying Salmon

Tools

- The tools that the Plateau people used were made from bone (arrow heads), wood (nets and carvings), and stone (spears and cutting tools), and were decorated with carvings, copper, feathers, and beads.
- The Ktunaxa people sometimes used feathers and coloured cloth to decorate their spears.



Ktunaxa dipper (ladle) for serving food



Root digging stick



Fish hook



Ktunaxa fish trap



Three-pronged fish spear



Hide scraper

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